



The Middle East Partnership Initiative

MEPI Programs Answer Calls of Arab Civil Society; Capacity and Networks Grow

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The United States government is supporting the calls for reform articulated by leaders of civil society in the Middle East. Civil Society declarations from Alexandria, Sanaa, Cairo, Beirut, and Rabat, coupled with decades of on-the-ground experience of nongovernmental organizations in the region, have yielded a democratic reform agenda whose ownership is firmly rooted in the region.

MEPI expands program with additional civil society awards:

Reflecting the strong U.S. support for the advocacy role, strengthened

capacities and reform priorities of local civil society, MEPI is receiving and funding more applications from indigenous regional NGOs. Among the newer civil society awards aimed at increasing political inclusiveness that permits citizens to have a more active role in decisions guiding public life are:

- **Bahrain Transparency Society**– To establish codes of conduct for Bahrain’s electoral processes. This project is centered on Bahrain’s 2006 municipal and national elections and will develop a system to collect data as well as monitor and evaluate Bahrain’s electoral processes (local and national elections, as well as the elections in other societies, professional syndicates and public companies);
- **Gulf Academy** - To establish a Gulf think tank to promote political and economic reforms. Activities include workshops, debates, and symposia to discuss key reform issues and democratization; creation of a databank on individuals and organizations to support reform objectives and the Gulf Institute for Democracy mission; development of a website on reform and democracy in the Gulf; and

production of an electronic newsletter to be called “Civilization Dialogue.”

- Civic Democratic Initiatives Support Foundation/

Yemen – to establish five national NGO support networks for democratic, legal and economic reform in the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Yemen and build a regional network including an information clearinghouse. Networks will exchange ideas, share training, support internal changes, and advocate national reform agendas;

- **Center for Arab Women Training and Research (CAWTAR)** - to promote informed dialogue on policy advocacy on local governance issues between women’s leaders, civil society, women’s grassroots organizations, and traditional leaders;

- Al-Urdun Al-Jadid Research Center/ Jordan - to build a network of civil society

organizations, organized around themes of constitutional and electoral reform, rule of law, the role of the media, participation of women and youth in political reform;

- **International Center for Not-For-Profit Law** - To develop a corps of local experts on the topic of reforming laws governing associative rights and the legal establishment of civil society organizations;

- **Association of Women Committees for Social Work**, a Ramallah-based NGO and former recipient of a MEPI small grant, to improve the effectiveness and transparency of local governance, and to sustain public dialogue on issues of communal interest following the Palestinian municipal elections;

- **Institute of International Education** - to increase educational skills and ability for Yemeni women to participate more fully in society; and

- **The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars** - to strengthen the practical skills of Arab women in the legislative process through the creation of joint plans of action prepared by Arab women across the region for influencing legislation that addresses women’s rights, using the Iraqi constitution process as a focal point.



MEPI is a Presidential initiative that supports economic, political, and educational reform efforts and women’s empowerment in the Middle East and expanded opportunity for all people of the region.

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